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PASTORAL LETTER

OF THE

MOST REV. M. J. SPALDING, D.D.

ARCHBISHOP OF BALTIMORE,

TO THE CLERGY AND LAITY OF THE ARCHDIOCESE,

ON

THE PAPAL INFALLIBILITY.

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*WRITTEN IN ROME, JULY 19, 1870.*

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**OF THE**  
**MOST REV. MARTIN JOHN SPALDING, D. D.**  
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PASTORAL LETTER  
OF THE  
MOST REV. ARCHBISHOP OF BALTIMORE  
TO THE CLERGY AND LAITY OF THE ARCHDIOCESE.

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*Venerable Brethren of the Clergy:*

*Beloved Brethren of the Laity:—*

NINE months have elapsed since We left you, in obedience to the voice of the Supreme Pontiff summoning all the Bishops of Christendom to the great Vatican Council. During this period We have been busily employed, but We have not failed daily to remember our dear flock and to pour forth to the throne of grace our poor prayers in their behalf. "For you are in our hearts, to die together, and to live together."\* And We have been comforted with the confident belief, that you too have not failed and will not fail to offer up your fervent supplications for us and for the success of the Council, whose deliberations may still be protracted for more than a year.

Never has there been, even in the grand old Catholic Church, a more august assemblage than that now convened in the most magnificent temple ever reared by human hands, near the tomb of Peter. The very site is hallowed by the blood of the early Christians torn by wild beasts or burnt to death, by order of the bloody Nero, in the first general persecution of the Church; for here stood Nero's Circus and Gardens, in which this bloody tragedy was enacted for the gratification of a brutal mob. And

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\* 11. Corinth. vii. 8.

that solid and stately granite obelisk, which now stands in front of the great church, formerly occupied a central place in Nero's grounds ; and it had to be removed but a few hundred feet to be placed in its present position. Of all the Roman obelisks, it is the only one which is entire and unbroken\*—a fit emblem of the unshaken solidity of Peter's faith and of the unbroken line of his successors. The Council Hall is in the wing of the transept, which is the chapel of SS. Processus and Martinianus, the pagan gaolers of St. Peter in the Mamertine prison, who converted and baptized by him sealed his and their faith with their blood. And if the present intention be carried out—of converting into a monument of the Council a column of variegated African granite, imported by Nero and recently discovered in the Marmorata—the world will be made to witness another of those wonderful examples of retributive justice, by which, in the providence of God, the wrath of the first persecutor is made to highten the glory and work out the exaltation of his most illustrious victim, and of the Church of which he was made the foundation rock. The divine Founder of the Church, whose words shall not pass away, has thus taken care of His own work, has protected His own chosen servants and ministers, and has brought it about, that on the monumental columns of Trajan and Marcus Aurelius, the statues of these pagan emperors have been replaced by those of Peter and Paul !

The Vatican Council is composed of Bishops from all the quarters of the globe—from Europe, Asia, America, Africa, Australia and the Islands of the Sea ; they speak many languages, but they are all of one faith, and, in one sense, they are all of one tongue. The Latin language is still that of the Church, and her far-seeing wisdom and world-wide view are strikingly exhibited in the fact, that all the business of the Council is transacted, and all the orations are delivered in this language, which on this very spot more than eighteen centuries ago was spoken with so much grace and dignity by Cicero and

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\* All the others were found fallen and shattered, and they have been put together in from three to five pieces.

Ennius—another striking historical co-incidence, in which we find extremes meeting.

A Council means debate. Discussion is the characteristic of all deliberative assemblies, of which the oldest and best models have been the Councils of the Catholic Church. From that of Jerusalem, presided over by Peter, to that of the Vatican, presided over by his successor, Pius IX., there has always been first "much disputing," and then later, after the matter had been discussed, and Peter or his successor had pronounced sentence, a great silence and peace.\*

Never has there been a Council in which there has existed fuller latitude or greater freedom for discussion, or one in which greater decorum and dignity has been observed. Every subject, or *Schema*, has been thoroughly examined in its most minute details and in all its possible bearings. The regulations provided for a triple discussion; the first in writing, the other two by word of mouth. After the distribution of the *Schema*, the Fathers were invited to hand in, in writing, within a specified period, their objections or modifications, to the appropriate Deputation or Committee, which thereupon instituted a searching examination, and reported back the result of their deliberations in the shape of a revised and reprinted *Schema*. Then the oral discussion began, first in general, or on the general matter and form of the *Schema*; and next in particular, on each chapter and even on each phrase and word, the speakers at the same time presenting in writing the amendments which they deemed opportune. These amendments were printed and distributed among the Fathers, who were advised of the day assigned for voting on them. The vote taken, such of the amendments as were adopted were embodied in the reprinted *Schema*, and then the Fathers were called upon to vote first on each separate part or chapter of the revised text, and next on the whole. The last vote was most solemn; it was taken by calling separately all the members of the Council, each of whom might answer in one of three ways: either by *Placet* or yea, by *Non Placet* or nay, or by *Placet juxta modum*, or yea

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\* Acts xv. 12.



with a modification. These modifications, handed in, in writing, were printed and sent back to the Deputation for examination, and on their Report to the Council, the final preparatory vote was taken in the general Congregation, preliminary to the solemn and conclusive vote in the public Session.

The great mass of these debates regarded the forms of expression rather than the substance of the things themselves, though some of them, especially on the last Constitution, to which We will soon refer, touched to a greater or less extent the substance itself, for at least the opportuneness of the definition. Every sentence, every phrase, every word, every comma even,\* was searchingly examined; and with a triple discussion and a triple preparatory vote, even humanly speaking, there could scarcely be room for a mistake. The judgments of the Church on matters of faith and morals when confirmed by the Roman Pontiff—as they necessarily must be—being irreversible and infallible, and regarding all time as well as all nations, all these precautions are wisely taken as a preliminary to the promised presence and assistance of the Holy Ghost, who then puts the seal of His infallible truth on the results of human research and industry. These are not only not excluded by the divine promises, but they are regarded not indeed as a condition of Infallibility, but as a moral duty of the assembled Fathers, who are bound to search the Scriptures and the Traditions of the Church before rendering their decision.

After these general remarks on the Council and its mode of procedure, We come now, Venerable and Beloved Brethren, to a subject which has excited much attention and interest throughout Christendom, and has provoked much discussion both in and outside the Council Hall. We refer to the Constitution just passed by an overwhelming majority of the Council,† on

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\* One of the most earnest debates and interesting votes of the assembled Fathers regarded the retention or omission of a comma. The text often passed through seven or eight revisions, before it was regarded as satisfactory.

† The final vote took place in the fourth public Session, held on the 18th July: it stood *Placet* 533, non *Placet* 2. The last preliminary vote in the public Congregation a few days previously stood *Placet* 451, non *Placet* 88, *Placet* with modification 62. Most of the last class voted *Placet* at the Session, while most of the non *Placet* voters chose to absent themselves, though they were perfectly free to

the Primacy and the Infallible Teaching of the Roman Pontiff, when he speaks *ex Cathedra*—that is, as Universal Pastor and Doctor, deciding for the whole Church a doctrine in matters of faith and morals. It is our duty officially to promulgate this Constitution, and to explain especially that portion of it which regards the Infallible official Teaching of the Pontiff. This is contained in the fourth Chapter of the Constitution, which We here furnish in a literal translation, and upon which We will then offer some explanations, which, We hope, may prove clear and satisfactory.

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## CHAPTER IV.

### ON THE INFALLIBLE TEACHING OF THE ROMAN PONTIFF.

Moreover, this Holy See has always held, the perpetual practice of the Church attests, and Œcumenical Councils themselves, especially those wherein the East and West came together to promote union in faith and charity, have declared that in the Apostolic Primacy itself, which the Roman Pontiff, as the successor of Peter, Prince of the Apostles, holds over the universal Church, is also included the supreme power of teaching. For the Fathers of the Fourth Council of Constantinople, treading in the footsteps of their predecessors, put forth this solemn profession: "The first thing necessary for salvation is to maintain the rule of sound faith. And since the words of Our Lord Jesus Christ who says, 'Thou art Peter and on this rock I will build my Church,' cannot be passed by, what was thus spoken is verified by the result; inasmuch as in the Apostolic See the Catholic religion has been always

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vote, as the example of two of their number proved. Comparing the total number of voters on this occasion with that of the Fathers who originally belonged to the Council, We notice a falling off of two hundred and twenty-nine, of whom about twelve had departed this life, and the remainder, with the exception above indicated, had been permitted for legitimate causes to return to their Dioceses, except a few of them who were detained by illness. The great majority of them were in favor of the Infallibility. See *Giornale di Roma*, July 18, 1870.

The total number of speeches delivered since the opening of the Council was about 420, of which about one hundred were on the question of Papal Infallibility, either in the general or in the special discussion.

preserved immaculate and her holy doctrine rendered illustrious. Desiring then by no means to be separated from the faith and doctrine of this See, we hope to be made worthy of the one communion which the Apostolic See proclaims in which consists the integrity and true stability of the Christian religion. Again with the approbation of the Second Council of Lyons, the Greeks professed that the Holy Roman Church has supreme and full primacy and preeminence over the whole Catholic Church, both of which she with truth and humility acknowledges having received with fulness of power from the Lord Himself in the person of Blessed Peter prince or Head of the Apostles, whose successor the Roman Pontiff is; and as above the rest she is bound to maintain the truth of faith, so too, if questions arise regarding faith, they must be finally settled by her judgment. Finally the Council of Florence has defined that the Roman Pontiff is true Vicar of Christ, Head of the whole Church and Father and Teacher of all Christians: and that to him in the person of Blessed Peter was given by Jesus Christ our Lord full power to feed, rule and govern the universal Church. To comply with this pastoral duty, our predecessors always with untiring care have labored that the saving doctrine of Christ might be spread through all peoples of the world, and with no less care did they watch in order that where it was received it might be preserved pure and undefiled. For which reason the Bishops of the whole world, at one time individually, at another assembled in synods, following the standing usage of their churches, and the tenor of ancient law, referred to this Apostolic See those dangers especially which arose in matters of faith, in order that the losses to faith might be repaired in that place above all others where faith cannot fail. And the Roman Pontiffs, as circumstances required, at one time by convoking Œcumenical Councils or by seeking out the belief of the Church dispersed throughout the world, at another by special synods or by using other means which Divine Providence afforded, defined whatever with God's help they had ascertained to be in accordance with the Holy Scripture and the

Apostolic Traditions. For the Holy Ghost was not promised to the successors of Peter that through His revelation they should promulgate new doctrine, but that through His assistance they should sacredly guard and faithfully expound the revelation or deposit of faith handed down through the Apostles. And their Apostolic doctrine all the Venerable Fathers have embraced, all holy orthodox doctors have revered and followed ; knowing full well that this See of Saint Peter remains ever free from any error, according to the divine promise of the Lord our Saviour, made to His chief disciple : ‘ I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not ; and thou once converted confirm thy brethren.’

“ This gift then of truth and unfailing faith was given from on high to Peter and his successors in this chair in order that they might fulfil their exalted office for the welfare of all, that through them the whole flock of Christ, being turned aside from the poisonous food of error, might be nourished with the meat of heavenly doctrine, so that all occasion of schism being removed, the whole Church might be preserved in unity, and leaning on its foundation might stand firm against the gates of hell.

“ But whereas in these very days when the saving efficacy of the Apostolic office is most needed, not a few are found to gain-say its authority ; we think it highly necessary solemnly to assert that prerogative which it pleased the Only-Begotten Son of God to attach to the supreme pastoral office.

“ Holding steadfastly therefore to the tradition received from the beginning of Christian faith, for the glory of God our Saviour, for the exaltation of the Catholic religion and salvation of Christian peoples, with the approbation of the Sacred Council, we teach and define to be a divinely revealed dogma, that the Roman Pontiff, when he speaks *ex cathedra*, that is when exercising his office of Pastor and Teacher of all Christians, in virtue of his supreme Apostolic authority he defines that any doctrine concerning faith or morals is to be held by the universal Church, by divine assistance promised him in the person of Blessed Peter, is gifted with that infallibility, where-

with the Divine Redeemer endowed His Church in defining matters of faith or morals ; and that therefore such definitions of the Roman Pontiff are irreformable of themselves, and not by consent of the Church.

“ But if any one, which God forbid, should presume to contradict this our definition, let him be anathema.”

A brief analysis of this doctrinal exposition and definition will show us, Venerable and Beloved Brethren, how clear and comprehensive is the former and how carefully guarded in all its expressions is the latter.

The exposition begins with the declaration, that the supreme power of teaching is embraced in the Apostolic Primacy, which was instituted in the person of Peter and his successors by Christ our Lord for the good of the Church, that all His followers might be preserved in the truth and thereby in the unity of the faith, by being all alike fed not with the poisonous food of error but with the wholesome aliment of sound doctrine. It then proceeds to enforce this teaching by the testimony of general Councils of the Church, particularly of those in which the East and the West came together for the purpose of re-establishing unity of faith and charity, interrupted by schism. These general Councils are three in number : the eighth, or fourth of Constantinople in the ninth century, the second of Lyons in the thirteenth, and that of Florence in the fifteenth. In these great assizes of the Church the subject of the Primacy of the Roman Pontiff, with its essential prerogatives, was specially discussed, and fully settled by general consent. The following principles were unanimously proclaimed, as clearly derived from the institution promises of Christ : first, that in the Apostolic or Roman See the Catholic faith has always been preserved immaculate, with the true and entire solidity of the Christian Religion, and that in consequence all are bound to be in communion with that See ; second, that the Roman Pontiff, having received in the Blessed Peter the Primacy, with the plenitude of power, is bound above all others to defend the truth of the faith, and that all questions which may arise in matters of faith must be defined,

or finally settled, by his judgment; and third, that he is the true Vicar of Christ upon earth, the Head of the whole Church, and the Father and Teacher of all Christians; and that in the Blessed Peter full power was given to him by our Lord Jesus Christ to feed, rule, and govern the universal Church.

The doctrinal exposition then proceeds to illustrate these principles by three great historical facts, which no one can gainsay, which meet your eye on almost every page of the ecclesiastical records, and which clearly prove that those principles were not merely theoretical but eminently practical, intimately connected with the practical working and the very life of the Church. The first fact is, that, in accordance with long custom and the ancient canonical rule, the Bishops of the Church were in the habit of constantly referring to the Holy See all ecclesiastical questions, especially those in which the faith was involved or might be endangered, in order, as St. Bernard says, that the damages to faith might be there repaired where the faith could not fail. The second fact is, that the Roman Pontiffs, on receiving such appeals, carefully studied the questions referred to them for final decision, availing themselves of all the means placed in their power, sometimes convoking general Councils, or enquiring into the belief of the Church dispersed, sometimes assembling particular Synods, or employing such other aids as divine Providence afforded; and after this careful preliminary study, they defined what they had ascertained to be conformable in the premises to the Holy Scriptures and Apostolical Tradition. Finally, the third fact is, that in all cases their decisions thus delivered were willingly accepted and adhered to by the Venerable Fathers and orthodox doctors of the whole Church, who were deeply persuaded that they could contain nothing but the truth, as the See of Peter could not but be preserved free from all error in virtue of the promise made by the Lord our Saviour to the Prince of His disciples: I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not. (St. Luke, xxii, 32.)

After this doctrinal exposition comes the definition of the Pontifical Infallibility itself, as based upon and derived from

the institution and promises of Christ, and as illustrated by the facts and principles just set forth, clearly showing the verdict of the Church of Christ for eighteen centuries on that divine institution and those divine promises. And lest any one should be led into error as to the nature and extent of this Pontifical Infallibility, and lest the enemies of the Church should take occasion from the definition to misrepresent and calumniate us, We deem it Our duty, in officially promulgating the doctrine, to explain first what this Infallibility is not, and secondly what it is. In doing this, We shall not have occasion to depart from the tenor of the Record itself, which either plainly expresses or clearly implies all that We shall have occasion to state in illustration or explanation.

#### I.—WHAT THE PAPAL INFALLIBILITY IS NOT.

1st. It is not impeccability or immunity from sin. The Pope regularly confesses his sins to the priest of Christ, like all other good Christians, and by the divine law, he is bound to do so as much as any other. Every day, before ascending the holy altar, he proclaims himself a sinner before God, before saints, angels, and men, and he thrice strikes his breast saying *mea culpa*—through my fault, through my fault, through my exceeding great fault. He makes the offertory for “his innumerable sins, offenses, and negligences,” and before the communion he again strikes his breast thrice, uttering the words of the centurion: “Lord I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof.” He spends whole hours every day in prayer for himself and for the whole flock of Christ divinely committed to his care, with a deep feeling of the fearful responsibility resting upon him to answer before the Great Shepherd, whose Vicar he is, for their salvation. Though the Roman Pontiffs are and freely acknowledge themselves to be sinful men, yet it is a remarkable evidence of the divine guardianship watching over them, that nearly all of them have been men of edifying conduct and holy life, that about one-third of them have been martyrs or canonized saints, and that in the whole line of succession stretching through eighteen centuries, not

more than five or six, out of two hundred and sixty, can be pointed to, even by the finger of enmity, as not having been much better in their private moral conduct than the average of contemporary worldly sovereigns; and of these few no one can say with truth that they ever attempted to change anything in the doctrines of the Church.

2. Infallibility does not attach to the Pope as a private person, nor as a temporal sovereign, nor as a private doctor writing or stating his own theological opinions; nor even as Pope delivering decisions in particular judicial cases depending for their merits on the testimony of men, much less in the words and acts of his ordinary life, outside the spiritual domain of faith and morals, of Church discipline and government.

3. The Papal Infallibility is not inspiration, such as was possessed by the Prophets and Apostles; nor is it a new *revelation* making known a new doctrine; but it is only a divine *assistance*, by which, though naturally of themselves weak and fallible, the Pontiffs are divinely enabled "holily to preserve and faithfully to expound the revelation or deposit of the faith delivered through the Apostles." Jm

4. Hence, it is manifest, that the Pontiffs cannot define any new doctrine not contained either expressly or impliedly in the original Deposit of the faith, much less can they define merely according to their own will or caprice, as their enemies are not ashamed sometimes to assert. As we have already shown, from the doctrinal exposition itself, they have always diligently used every means at their command to ascertain what was conformable to the Holy Scriptures and Apostolic Traditions before deciding on any question of faith or morals, and they will certainly continue to do so in the future; for nowhere is precedent more rigidly adhered to, or regarded as more sacred than in the Roman Church, as every one knows.

## II.—WHAT THE PAPAL INFALLIBILITY IS.

1. The Pontiff is infallible, not in his *private*, but in his *official* character, when he speaks *ex Cathedra*—from his official magisterial or teaching Chair—as the Father and Teacher of



all Christians, and when thus speaking, he defines, by his supreme Apostolic authority, a doctrine on faith or morals to be held by the universal Church; and this Infallibility derives, not from any personal wisdom or other quality in himself, but from the divine assistance promised to him in the Blessed Peter. The end for which it was bestowed is the good of the Church, that the flock of Christ may be always preserved in sound faith and guarded from fatal error and heresy, and that thus the purpose of Christ in establishing His Church may not be thwarted, but faithfully carried out and realized to the consummation of the world.

From this it follows: First, that the Papal Infallibility, in the strict sense of the definition, is confined to the domain of doctrine on faith and morals; secondly, that the Pontiff must define, or finally settle a doctrine, not merely declare more or less strongly a belief; thirdly, that the definition must contain a doctrine to be held by the whole Church; and fourthly, that the definition must be *official* or *ex Cathedra*, according to the meaning attached to the word, as above stated.

2. The formula of the definition further declares, that, under these circumstances, the Pontiff "is endowed with the same Infallibility with which the divine Redeemer wished His Church to be invested while defining a doctrine on faith or morals." This portion of the definition makes the official Papal Infallibility identical in its objects and limits, in its extent and certitude, with that of the Church itself; and as the latter is well known to all theologians and to all well instructed Catholics, the former, being the same, is thus easily ascertained by all who sincerely wish to know the truth.

3. To proscribe the error of those who pretend that the official Infallibility of the Pontiff is not derived from the promises of Christ made directly to Peter and his successors but from the consent of the Church, a clause is added to the definition to the effect, "that such definitions (as above) of the Roman Pontiff are irreformable, or irreversible, *of themselves*, and not from the consent of the Church. We shall have occasion to refer to this branch of the subject more at length further on.

All this is in full conformity with what the Angel of the Schools—St. Thomas Aquinas—wrote six hundred years ago, proclaiming the universal faith of the Church before and in the thirteenth century. He says: “The faith of the whole Church should be one, according to that of St. Paul (Corinth., I.), ‘Let all say the same thing, nor let schisms exist among you;’ which could not be observed, unless a question of faith which might arise should be finally settled by him who presides over the whole Church, that thus his decision may be held by the whole Church. Therefore it belongs to the authority of the Roman Pontiff alone to issue a new edition of the Symbol, (or Confession of faith), as likewise to do all other things which concern the whole Church.”\*

In order to illustrate more fully this important subject, We will endeavor, Venerable and Beloved Brethren, to establish the three following propositions:—

I. That in defining the PUBLIC and OFFICIAL Infallibility of the Roman Pontiff in his solemn judgment and final decisions on matters of faith and morals for the guidance of the whole Church, the Vatican Council has set up no new doctrine, but has merely proclaimed in a most solemn manner a truth which was handed down from the beginning, which, in all its essential principles, has been for centuries generally and practically accepted and acted upon by the Holy Catholic Church;

II. That there is no valid reason for asserting, that this definition will or should so greatly startle or shock the prejudices of non-Catholics, as to prevent or even retard their conversion to the true faith;

III. That the definition should afford no reasonable cause of complaint to civil governments, even to those which are free, or profess to be based upon what is called *Liberalism*.

We will take up these propositions in order.

I. *In defining the PUBLIC and OFFICIAL Infallibility of the Roman Pontiff in his solemn judgments and final decisions of matters of faith and morals for the guidance of the whole Church,*

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\* St. Thomas, Summa, 2. 2. Quæstio 1. Art. X.

*the Vatican Council has set up no new doctrine, but has merely proclaimed in a more solemn manner a truth which was handed down from the beginning, and which, in all its essential principles, has been for centuries generally and practically accepted and acted upon by the Holy Catholic Church.*

We must view this subject from the Catholic standpoint, which is the Infallibility of the Church in her teaching concerning matters of faith and morals. Now we maintain, that given the Infallibility of the Church, that of the Pontiff follows as a logical and necessary consequence. For according to Catholic doctrine, the Pope, in the person of St. Peter, whose successor he is, was appointed by Jesus Christ the Rock upon which the Church is firmly built as upon a solid foundation, with the solemn promise made by Him who could not deceive, that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it (St. Math. xvi. 18.); he is the divinely constituted Confirmer of his brethren, with the clearly implied promise, as a necessary consequence of the special prayer of Christ, that his faith shall not fail, while discharging the important office of confirming his brethren (St. Luke xxii. 32); he is the great chief shepherd of the one fold, with the office solemnly committed to him by Christ to feed the lambs and the sheep—the entire flock (St. John xxi. 15-17.); finally, he is the visible head of the Church, Christ Jesus being the great invisible Head who purchased it with His blood, and who has by His solemn promises guaranteed its stability and purity of faith by His presence and assistance all days even to the consummation of the world.—(St. Math. xxviii. 20.) Heaven and earth will pass away, but His word shall not pass away.—(St. Math. xxiv. 35.)

Now this being the Catholic doctrine, how is it possible to conceive that the Roman Pontiff, so intimately and indissolubly connected with the indestructible and infallible Church by divine appointment, can be himself fallible in his public and official teaching for the whole Church? Can we logically conceive of an infallible and indestructible edifice built upon a fallible and tottering foundation? Can we imagine an infallible body of brethren confirmed, or strengthened in the faith,

by a fallible Confirmer? Can we suppose that an infallible sheepfold can be guided, governed, and nurtured with the food of sound doctrine by a fallible chief shepherd? Finally, can we conceive of an infallible body directed by a fallible head? All these suppositions are plainly inconsistent and illogical; they are clearly unworthy the wisdom of Christ, and irreconcilable with His solemn and reiterated promises in behalf of His Church. In willing the indefectibility and the infallibility of His Church, He clearly adopted means adequate to this great end; and no matter how seemingly weak or imperfect these means might appear, His wisdom and His power could and would supply all deficiencies and infallibly secure the end contemplated. Evidently, in conformity with His plan and promise, the infallibility of the Church and that of its visible head are indissolubly associated; they stand and fall together; they are one.

Accordingly we find, Venerable and Beloved Brethren, that this great principle has been recognized and acted on by the Church from the very beginning. The Church has invariably and in all ages received and adhered to the solemn decisions of its visible head and supreme judge in matters of faith and morals; there is clearly no exception to this great fact of Church History.\* Partial, even violent opposition there may have been, and there occasionally was, for a time, against such decisions; but in the end, the papal decision carried the day

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\* The case of Honorius forms no exception; for 1, Honorius expressly says in his Letters to Sergius that he meant to define nothing, and he was condemned precisely because he temporized and would not define; 2, because in his Letters he clearly taught the sound Catholic doctrine, only enjoining silence as to the use of certain terms, then new in the Church; and 3d, because his letters were not addressed to a general council of the whole Church, and were rather private ~~than~~ public and official—at least they were not published, even in the East, until several years later. The first Letter was written to Sergius in 633, and eight years afterwards—in 641—the Emperor Heraclius, in exculpating himself to Pope John II., Honorius' successor, for having published his edict—the *Ecthesis*—which enjoined silence on the disputants, similar to that imposed by Honorius, lays the whole responsibility thereof on Sergius, who, he declares, composed the Edict. Evidently, Sergius had not communicated the Letter to the Emperor, probably because its contents if published would not have suited his wily purpose of secretly introducing, under another form, the Eutychian heresy. Thus falls to the ground the only case upon which the opponents of Infallibility have continued to insist. This entire subject has been exhausted by many recent learned writers.

and won the general assent of the Church. So it was in the early cases of Popes St. Victor and St. Stephen; so it was in the stormy days of Arianism in the fourth century; so it was in all the controversies of the early ages; so it has continued to be down to our days. The limits of this Pastoral Instruction will not allow me to go into details, nor are these deemed necessary, as they may easily be found in works accessible to all.\* The Popes always triumphed in their doctrinal decisions, according to the verdict of the Church itself; and the necessary inference is, that if the Popes erred in such decisions the Church itself likewise erred, and, in fact, necessarily erred—against the solemn promises of Christ.

For, besides the general fact of adhesion just stated reaching back to the earliest ages of the Church, there are two practical principles which have been clearly settled and generally acted on by the Church for centuries, especially for about two hundred years, since the rise of Jansenism and the controversies excited by Gallicanism. These are: 1st, that all Christians are bound to yield not only *external* respect, but also *internal* assent to the solemn decisions of the Roman Pontiff; 2nd, that no appeal can be lawfully made from such decisions to a general Council—the only other tribunal in the Church to which an appeal could possibly be made.

— The first of these principles was settled against the Jansenists by various Pontiffs, with the full and cordial concurrence of the Church: by Innocent X. in 1653, by Alexander VII. in 1664 and 1665, and finally, by Clement XI. in 1705, in his famous Constitution against what was called the *Case of Conscience*. This was the last subterfuge of intriguing and reckless Jansenism, which was but a revival, under another form, of Calvinism. To escape from the solemn condemnations by various Pontiffs of the five propositions of Jansenius, which were censured as heretical, the Jansenists asserted that it was sufficient to exhibit external respect to the Pontifical decisions, while, at the same time, they were at full liberty still to believe

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\* Among other books on the subject, see the admirable work of our Venerable Predecessor, on the Primacy.

internally in the proscribed heresy. The Pontiff strongly condemned this hypocritical device, with the world-wide applause of the Catholic Episcopate: and the principle lying at the basis of this condemnation was henceforth recognized as one of Catholic doctrine, even according to the Gallican idea which requires the assent of the Church to render a Papal decision final and irreformable.

The second principle—against appealing to a general Council—was settled from an earlier date, with a similar concurrence of the Church. Pope Pius II. in 1459, and his successors Sixtus IV., Julius II., besides others, united in condemning as unlawful and even as execrable, all such appeals to a general Council from the final decisions of the Pope. This principle has thus become so clearly settled that any one who would deny its truth would not escape the accusation, or at least the suspicion of heresy.

Now, Beloved Brethren, is not the inference from these two principles clear and irresistible? If all Catholics are bound to yield full and cordial assent to the official judgments of the Pontiff, and if no appeal lies from his decisions, is it not plain that if the Pontiff should err in such decisions the whole Church would necessarily be led into fatal error, the whole work of Christ for the salvation of men would be marred, and the infallibility of the Church would be at an end. The conclusion then is obvious: that to be consistent, a Catholic must either believe in the official infallibility of the Pope, or reject the infallibility of the Church. There is clearly no alternative.

You will naturally ask Us, Beloved Brethren, if the matter was already practically settled, why did the Vatican Council issue its solemn definition on the subject? The question is reasonable, and We will endeavor to answer it as briefly and as clearly as possible. The answer may be comprised in one phrase—*Gallicanism revived*.\* It would lead us too far to go

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\* We do not wish to be understood as here intending to cast any reflection whatsoever on the course adopted by those Bishops of Christendom, who, using their clear right of discussion in the Council, questioned the opportuneness or propriety of the definition. We refer to various publications outside the Coun-

into the history or to discuss the principles of Gallicanism. All that will be necessary for our purpose will be a brief summary of what is most prominent and important.

The principles of Gallicanism may be said to date back to the beginning of the fifteenth century, when the Council of Constance in its fourth and fifth sessions passed the celebrated decrees, which declared that the authority of a general Council is superior to that of the Pope. It was at an abnormal period of the Church, during the great Schism, when there were no less than three claimants for the Papal tiara. The Schism itself had been brought about chiefly by the intrigues of the French Court, which had induced the Roman Pontiffs to remove their residence from Rome to Avignon; and it broke out soon after the return of the Pontiffs to their legitimate Capital. It is but fair to believe, that the decrees of Constance were meant to apply only to the abnormal state of Schism; when, though it was clear that one of the claimants was the lawful Pope, doubts existed as to the fact and the law—which one was the legitimate successor of St. Peter? In this sad state of things, the saddest the Church had ever experienced, it was necessary to find an adequate remedy; and this was at length obtained in the Council, by persuading the two claimants who seemed to have the strongest reasons on their side, to resign, and by deposing the third, who had little reason and scarcely any adherents. So it was done, and the Schism was happily healed. The divine vitality of the Church was thus clearly demonstrated; and under the protection of God and in fulfilment of the promises of Christ, she was delivered from the greatest peril which had ever menaced her existence; she

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oil, which appeared in Germany and France during the last eight months: such as that entitled *Janus*, which filled all good Catholics with horror. Many of those were conceived in the worst spirit, far worse even than that of the older Gallicans, and they were openly scandalous, going in some instances to the very verge of heresy. They greatly contributed to render necessary and to hasten the very definition they were intended to oppose. The Presidents, with the concurrence of the great body of the Fathers of the Council, entered a Solemn Protest against two of these pestilent pamphlets, written in French, as replete with false statements, affecting the good name of the Council and that of the Holy Father himself.

came out of the Schism stronger than she had been before, and since that day her career has been more brilliant than ever.

The great mistake was, the attempt to generalize the exceptional declarations of the Council of Constance, issued when the maxim was current that a doubtful pope is no pope—*Papa dubius, Papa nullus*. This first attempt was made in the Council of Basle, convened some twenty years later under Pope Eugenius IV. But the attempt signally failed. The Council of Basle soon degenerated into a Schismatical Conventicle; matters settled down into their normal state, and the great Council of Florence, convened a few years later, defined the Primacy of the Pontiff and his high prerogatives in more ample terms than had ever been previously employed.

Everything then went on peaceably and triumphantly for the Papacy and its divinely granted prerogatives for more than two centuries—until the eventful Assembly of the Gallican Clergy in 1682. This body issued an unfortunate and most mischievous Declaration, in four articles. It was convened and its action controlled by one among the greatest monarchs, but perhaps the most absolute and despotic who ever ruled over France—Louis XIV., to whom has been ascribed the saying *La France, c'est moi!*—France, it is myself! He and his wily minister, in order to secure the extension of the Regalia for vacant Sees and thereby to enrich the royal coffers, managed to get into the Assembly thirty-six out of the one hundred and twenty Bishops of the illustrious French Church, men who were considered the most pliable and supple—among them, unhappily, the great Bossuet himself—without whose commanding and conservative influence, however, many think that the Assembly would have degenerated into a Schismatical Conventicle. As it was, the Declaration was immediately annulled, together with the Acts of the Assembly by Innocent XI., and then by successive Pontiffs Alexander VIII., Innocent XII., and finally by Pius VI. Most of the Bishops who had signed the Declaration retracted, and even Louis XIV. withdrew his edict. The great body of the noble French Episcopate and Clergy, always remained firm and unshaken in



their loyalty to the Pontiff.\* Nevertheless the evil was not undone, but rather increased in its extent. The annulled and proscribed Declaration was forced on the French Clergy, and its principles were ordered to be taught in the French Seminaries by royal and parliamentary decrees, which continued in force for about a century; when Gallicanism at length washed its garments in the blood of the French revolution, and apparently ceased to exist. Its martyrdom of suffering and blood was its greatest, its only claim to glory.

Thus Gallicanism may be said to have been conceived in schism, to have been born in tyranny and attempted spoliation of the Church, finally to have died a glorious death in the French revolution. Why did it ever awaken into new life? What good had it ever done in the world, to compensate for the mischief which it had accomplished? It had sown distrust between the Episcopate and the Papacy; its principles had been seized on and dexterously employed by the Jansenists to propagate their heresy; they have been used or abused by every free-thinker in Catholic Theology who has sought to leave the beaten track of Catholic doctrine and to startle his disciples by novelties, often dangerous to faith in their tendency and as such justly condemned by the Roman Pontiffs.

Its principles, so far as they were theological,† consisted in a revival of the Decrees of Constance declaring the superiority of the Council over the Pope, in limiting the exercise of the papal prerogative to what is contained in the canons, without apparently granting him the power of exceptions or dispensations, and especially in regard to the received usages, rules, and institutions of the French Church; finally, in the declaration made in the fourth and last article, which we give textually, in a literal translation, as it contains the gist of Gallicanism as lately revived, to the utter astonishment of all Christendom.

“Likewise in questions of faith (we declare) that the Sovereign

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\* For full details and proofs, see the late work of M. Gerin, which exhausts the subject.

† Of the **first** article in the Declaration, which denies any temporal power of the Pope over sovereigns or governments, We will have occasion to speak further on.

Pontiff has the principal part, and that his decrees regard the Churches, all and singular ; nevertheless, that his judgment is not irreformable, unless ratified by the consent of the Church."

Any comparison between the power of the Pontiff and that of a general Council, outside the time of a papal schism, is clearly preposterous, from the Catholic stand-point. For as all Catholic divines admit that there can be no general Council without the Pope, the question as to which is greater would resolve itself into this : is the Council of Bishops, together with the Pope, superior to the Pope alone ; or this, is the Pope alone superior to the Pope with the Council of Bishops ? Every one sees, at a glance, how very absurd such a comparison would be, and will hence infer that the Council of Constance could not possibly have intended to extend their decrees beyond the time of schism. y.

The attempt to limit the exercise of the papal jurisdiction by the canons, of which the Pontiff is the divinely accredited interpreter, and in which he may dispense in case of need, was clearly a limitation of the power of the Keys given to him in its plenitude, in the person of Peter by our Lord Himself ; while the reservation specially made in behalf of the customs received in the Gallican Church seemed to look towards setting up a national church, whose local laws and customs should be of paramount authority. Happily, the dangerous principle was not carried out to its full extent, thanks to the deeply seated and abiding loyalty of the noble French hierarchy ; else schism would have been the necessary result.

But the most dangerous of all the articles, as has been already intimated, was the fourth requiring the consent of the Church as an essential condition for rendering the judgment of the Pontiff on questions of faith—final and irreformable. This principle once admitted, many practical difficulties of a most embarrassing nature would arise, which would render the Papal decision of little or no effect. For how long should we wait for this consent of the Church, before accepting the Papal judgment as final ? What consent would be required ; that of a minority, of a majority of the Bishops of Christendom, or a

moral unanimity? Should this consent be express or implied—a tacit and merely negative acquiescence or a clearly marked acceptance? And in the meantime, the proscribed error or heresy would have full time to spread and to seduce thousands, perhaps millions of the faithful. As we have seen, the Jan-senists availed themselves of this very principle to extend their heresy, which else would have been of much shorter duration.

The fourth article seems to refer chiefly to the consent of the Church *subsequent* to the Pontiff's judgment; but besides this, there is an *antecedent* and a *concomitant* consent of the Church. The latter suffers no difficulty, when it refers to that given by the Bishops assembled in general Council under the presidency of the Pontiff in person or through his legates. This has never failed to be given, and according to the essential Constitution of the Church, it can never fail; else the Council would and could not be general, but would be plainly schismatical, and its decisions null and void. The antecedent consent of the Church, though by no means essential to irreformable finality of the Papal judgment, which derives its divine solidity from the immediate concession of Christ and His solemn promises to Peter and his successors, has, however, been often secured in advance; as has been already seen in the historical and doctrinal exposition of the Vatican Council given above.

In fact, all students of Church History, and all who are even slightly acquainted with the method of procedure invariably adopted by the Holy See in its doctrinal decisions, cannot fail to have remarked the patient and protracted deliberations which invariably precede the issuing of such judgments. No industry is spared, no means left untried, to ascertain the doctrine of the Church as contained in the deposit of Scripture and tradition. Sometimes, as in the case of defining the Immaculate Conception, all the Bishops of Christendom are previously consulted; sometimes, general Councils are convened; sometimes particular synods; in all cases, the matter in issue is maturely discussed by repeated Congregations of Cardinals aided by the most learned theologians: and no decision is made until the whole ground has been accurately and fully surveyed

in all its parts and bearings. Thus, before the condemnation of Jansenism, from forty to fifty Congregations of Cardinals were held, many of them in the presence of the Pontiff, and the deliberations extended over the space of two years. Very generally also, provincial or national Councils are held on the spot where the new error has been first broached, and the judgment pronounced in these inferior Courts of the Church are carried up for final adjudication to the Supreme Court of Christendom, whose decision is final and infallible.

Without this permanent, ever living and present supreme tribunal for finally settling controversies on faith and morals, sufficient provision would not have been made by our Dear Lord for the faith of the Church, which He purchased with His blood, and secured from error by His infallible promises. General Councils cannot be convened except at long intervals, and under the pressure of the greatest emergencies. It is only with the greatest difficulty, that nearly a thousand Bishops, scattered over the whole world, can be brought together in general Council; and often the political condition of the world is so disturbed as to render such meetings impracticable. Accordingly, we find that nearly three hundred years elapsed before the meeting of the first general Council at Nice in 325; and three hundred and six years have elapsed from the close of the last general Council of Trent in 1563 and the opening of the first of the Vatican in 1869; while more than two hundred and fifty years intervened between the eighth and the ninth general Councils.

Under these circumstances, how could heresies be condemned, and the ruin of the Church be averted, unless Christ our Lord had given to the successor of Peter the prerogative to pronounce authoritative judgment with unerring and infallible certainty? To what other tribunal can recourse be had for finally settling controversies and preserving unity? Plainly to none other, as even apart from the solemn declarations and promises of Christ, all Church History proclaims, with a thousand tongues. Most of the heresies which have in various ages sprung up in the Church have been solemnly condemned

by the Roman Pontiffs, without the intervention of general Councils; and, as we have already seen, in no case has it ever occurred that the Church dispersed over the world did not adhere to and concur in the Papal decisions thus rendered. The facts of Church History thus furnish a clear and conclusive comment on the promises of Christ, and exhibit the infallibility of the Church as essentially identical with that of the Roman Pontiff pronouncing *ex Cathedra*, through the Apostolic authority imparted to him by the divine Founder of the Church. It is in this sense that Suarez, the great theologian and champion of Papal Infallibility, writes: "When the Pontiff defines, the Church speaks through her head; nor is the body separated from the head, nor is the head separated from the body."\* According to the essential Constitution of the Church as divinely settled, such a separation is clearly impossible; the head gives life and movement to the body, the head directs and leads, the body obeys and follows. In the human body, the head may be separated from the members, but death immediately and necessarily ensues from the separation: the Church, which is the body of Christ, is immortal; and therefore no separation can possibly take place.

Thus, from the Catholic stand-point, whichever way we turn, we cannot logically believe in the Infallibility of the Church, without, at the same time, admitting the Official Infallibility of its visible head, the Roman Pontiff. And it is not at all to be wondered at that this cardinal point of Catholic doctrine should have been defined in the Council of the Vatican, as it had been so publicly impugned, with so much evil to the Church, since the close of the last general Council of Trent; particularly as the opposition to it has lately been re-awakened in a manner so fierce and so determined. It was surely time to settle finally a question which has produced so much excitement, to the great embarrassment and disedification of the faithful.

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\* Cum Pontifex definit, Ecclesia per caput suum loquitur; neque corpus separatur a Capite, neque caput a corpore.—Definit Fidei, C. 23, No. 7.

The decision presents nothing new in substance ; it is only a solemn and authoritative definition of what has always been the general belief of Catholic Christendom, and which, from what we have already shown, has been admitted in practice, even by that small portion of Catholics who denied it in theory. These, in fact, could not have done otherwise ; for resistance to the formal definitions of the Pontiff on matters of faith and morals, or yielding to them only external respect and not internal assent, would have placed them at once outside the pale of Catholic communion.

We pass now, Venerable and Beloved Brethren, to the second proposition which We promised briefly to illustrate.

*There is no valid reason for asserting that the definition will or should so greatly startle or shock the prejudices of non-Catholics, as to prevent or even retard their Conversion to the true faith.*

Why should it ? If non-Catholics and unbelievers choose to believe less than we, or nothing at all, why should they be particularly shocked if we believe more or something ? As We have already shown, it is not question here of the innate or natural infallibility of man, but of the infallibility of *God*, who is true to His promises, omnipotent in His action, and faithful in carrying out effectually His high purposes, in spite of the weakness of the instrument He employs. And, in this view of the case, it is surely as easy for Him to guard from error one man appointed by Himself as the teacher and leader of His people, as it is to guard a thousand dispersed over the world. And if there be any difference of degree it would seem more obvious and reasonable for Him to guard from error in preference the head, that the body might not be led astray, to secure the foundation, that the edifice might not totter or fall, to enlighten and fortify the shepherd, that the whole flock of sheep and lambs might not be scattered, devoured by wolves, or led to poisonous instead of wholesome pastures.

A long acquaintance and a friendly discussion with intelligent and candid non-Catholics running through a period of more than the third of a century, has impressed Us with the conviction, that what they admire most in the Catholic contro-

vertist is candor, directness, and an openness which leaves no suspicion that anything is left in the back-ground or meant to be concealed. They admire a man, who feels strong enough to accept the whole position, and who is bold enough to meet every issue and to decline no responsibility.

The first things which strike a cultivated non-Catholic, when his attention is called to the Catholic Church, are its world-wide grandeur of extension, its superhuman and marvelous unity of faith and its tenacious consistency in so steadily adhering to principle amid weal and woe; and above all, its wonderful antiquity, indicated so strikingly in its long line of Pontiffs reaching back, through the wreck of kingdoms and the vicissitudes of human affairs, to the time when Peter and Paul first came poor strangers and pilgrims to the Eternal City, to set up the standard of the Crucified in the magnificent Metropolis and mistress of the world. The range of human history can present no parallel to this line of Venerable Pontiffs, through whose energetic exertions and untiring zeal apostles were ordained and successively sent out to convert the nations, and to knit them as fast as converted to the great Roman centre of unity, so that in the course of a few centuries the world became Christian, even far beyond the boundaries of the Roman empire. Thus was accomplished the promise of Christ, the great divine Shepherd of the flock, through the agency of His delegated chief shepherd: "And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also must I call, and there shall be *One Sheepfold under the one Shepherd*.\*"

The chief agents, under Christ, of this marvelous transformation were manifestly the Roman Pontiffs; and to them, whenever it is question of the Church, all eyes are spontaneously directed. Now, in discussing with Protestants, we take this high stand-point, as our beginning, and from it we easily survey the whole field and point out all its bearings, with the official Infallibility of the Pontiffs established, and along with it the necessary adherence of the body to the head,

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\*St. John, x. 16

we explain at once the secret of that wonderful unity and tenacity of faith which so puzzles the unbeliever in supernatural interposition and guidance. The fidelity of Christ in fulfilling His promise, that the gates of hell shall not prevail against His Church built upon Peter as a rock, and that his faith should not fail that he might safely and securely confirm his brethren, makes clear what else would be well nigh, if not wholly inexplicable.

True, without expressly maintaining the official Infallibility of the Pope as an article of faith, we have hitherto been able to explain and defend triumphantly the Infallibility of the Church, and to answer the objection as to the subject, or seat of Infallibility. But we have done so more or less haltingly in the view of the more intelligent and shrewder class of non-Catholic inquirers. Our usual answer has been, that, even admitting the separate fallibility of the head and of the body apart from the head, the two conjoined constitute the seat of Infallibility divinely guaranteed. This last proposition always has been and it still is the Catholic doctrine; but its explanation would probably be more satisfactory to the intelligent mind, if our process began with the head and thence proceeded to the body. It is much more simple and far more readily understood; and it obviates many objections which have been already sufficiently alluded to. The promises of Christ were first made to Peter, and then to the apostles along with Peter: he was full sharer in all the promises made to the apostolic college, while he had divinely secured to him prerogatives bestowed on none of the rest, nor on the entire college apart from him, and what is true of Peter and the apostles, is also true of the Pope and the Bishops.

While professing their belief in the divine mission of the apostles and in the inspiration of the New Testament, evangelical Protestants admit the Infallibility of Peter and of the other apostles, at least of such of them as were inspired writers. Why was this gift of Infallibility conferred on them? Plainly, that the whole body of Christians who would be instructed by their writings might not be necessarily led into error. It was



for the security and common good of Christendom that this extraordinary gift was divinely bestowed. The Infallibility of the other apostles did not descend to their successors, the individual bishops; because these were to have charge of only particular and local churches, and their error would thus not affect or mislead the whole body, and it might moreover be readily remedied by the ordinary powers left by Christ with His divinely constituted Church. The case was widely different with Peter and his successors, whose jurisdiction was to remain world-wide, and whose error—if official error there could be—would necessarily taint and ruin the entire body of the Church. For, from the very beginning of the Church, from and before the days of Irenæus, in the second century, it was a generally received axiom and rule of conduct, that “all other churches—that is, the faithful who are everywhere, MUST OF NECESSITY AGREE with the Roman Church.”\*

It may indeed happen, that ignorant and prejudiced men will sneer at and calumniate this doctrine, as making an idol of a man; but with the clear and, we trust, satisfactory explanations of the true meaning of the doctrine, as already furnished, we may well afford to disregard all such misrepresentations, which can mislead only those who wish to be misled. The Catholic Church has been so long accustomed to be assailed by such weapons, that she looks upon them as harmless to herself, and injurious only to those who wield them. The great and essential question is this: is the Church a divine or is it merely a human institution? If the former, no candid man with ordinary intelligence can be shocked or startled at its claiming official Infallibility for its divinely constituted head, foundation rock, and chief shepherd, in virtue of the solemn promises of Christ, who is God, and whose word cannot pass away unfulfilled. If the latter, then there can be plainly no question of infallibility whatsoever; and accordingly we are

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\* Ad quam (R. Ecclesiam) necesse est omnem convenire ecclesiam, id est omnes qui sunt undique fideles. Contra Haer. I. iii. c. 3. Bossuet and De Marcos, unsuspected witnesses, both translate *convenire* by *s'accorder—agree with*—which is its undoubted meaning. So if the Roman Church could teach error, all the other churches would necessarily be led astray from the faith.

not at all surprised that the human sects lay no claim to this prerogative in theory, whatever they may do in practice.

But even in all well regulated human societies, whether religious or civil, there always exists, besides a chief executive, a supreme judge or court, to which all cases in controversy are or may be ultimately referred, and whose decision is final and irreformable—that is, in so far infallible, that no remedy can be found in case of error. This is the case with our own free government; the judgments of the Supreme Court can be reversed by no other tribunal. It is not, indeed, intrinsically infallible, because nothing that is merely human is or can be infallible, and because in human things, which so soon pass away, infallibility is not essential. It is not so in divine things, upon which eternity depends, and in which error may be fatal for eternity; and accordingly we find, that our Blessed Lord, in His infinite goodness and wisdom, was pleased to guaranty from error His appointed supreme judge, that his decisions might be safely looked up to, in all ages, by His people, as not only final but infallible; as, in fact, His own judgments pronounced in His name by His own Vicar and minister plenipotentiary on earth. Thus He redeems His solemn promise made to Peter: “To thee will I give the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, it shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shall loose on earth, it shall be loosed in heaven.”\* Was ever promise more ample; was ever promise kept more faithfully? Let the solemn verdict of eighteen centuries answer.

To illustrate the Gallican principle, as compared with that of the Catholic Church, let us for a moment apply the former to the judgments of our Supreme Court. Suppose it were a principle of law with us,—that the judgments of the Supreme Court were not final until after the consent and concurrence of all or the most of the inferior Courts would have been previously asked and obtained! The legal mind would shudder at the bare thought; and even common sense would be revolted, and would regard the new principle as disorganizing

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\* St. Math. xvi. 18.

and necessarily leading to anarchy. The inferior Courts are all well enough within their own sphere and attributions ; but to give them the power to revise and nullify the decisions of the Supreme Court would lead to the ruin of all well regulated jurisprudence, and consequently of all social order and security.

And this shows how groundless is the allegation, that declaring the judgments of the Supreme Court in the Catholic Church, or of the Sovereign Pontiff, final and infallible, carries with it the abrogation of the judicial power of the Bishops, who are also judges of the faith. They are judges, indeed, but inferior and subordinate judges in their own respective Dioceses ; and this right is not only not impaired, but it is rather strengthened by proclaiming the judgments of the Supreme Court of the Church final and irreformable. Each Court is thus left in its own appropriate sphere, and there is and can be no clashing whatsoever between their respective powers, the inferior judges freely admitting that their decisions may be revised and reversed by him whom they recognize as the supreme judge by divine appointment. When assembled in Council with the Supreme Judge, they are associate judges, who must pronounce judgment in unison with their Chief ; as always has been the case, and as from the very nature and divine Constitution of the Church, must always and necessarily be the case. The head and the members have always been united ; and so long as the promises of Christ will endure, they always will and must be united. The history of all general Councils clearly establishes this ; and of none is it more conspicuously true than of the present glorious Council of the Vatican. Fidelity to the Pope by the Bishops secures to the latter the fidelity and obedience of both priests and people under their jurisdiction ; while the rejection of the papal authority has invariably ended in the Bishops becoming the slaves of the civil power, or the subservient instruments of the flocks over whom they are placed ; all history proclaims this truth.

We pass now, Venerable and Beloved Brethren, to the illustration of the third proposition which We undertook to estab-

lish ; and We must necessarily be brief, not to overstep the legitimate limits of a Pastoral Letter.

III. *The definition should afford no reasonable cause of complaint to civil governments, even to those which are free, or profess to be based upon what is called LIBERALISM.*

We have already, We trust, sufficiently shown that the definition will make no *practical* change whatever either in the *modus operandi*, or in the extent of the field to which the papal prerogative will still be confined, namely, to that of faith and morals. We cannot see how civil governments can take any reasonable umbrage at the solemn declaration of what has thus always been so generally believed, and so universally acted on in the Church, without any detriment to their real interests.

No intention whatsoever is entertained, or even so much as thought of, to interfere with existing civil governments. On the contrary, the Church and the Popes will always inculcate on her children, as in times past, the sacred duty of obedience to the existing powers, whether monarchical, liberal, or republican, in all things connected with the well-being of society, and the legitimate objects of civil government ; and the Church and the Popes, as heretofore, will always continue to protest, in the name of God and of the right, against all encroachments of the civil power on the spiritual domain, and on the legitimate and time-honored rights of the Church. In all this, no change whatever need be apprehended ; and all attempts to get up undue excitement as to imaginary projects of the Church and the Papacy against the rights or stability of existing civil governments, should be discarded at once, as not only signally mischievous, but as wholly groundless and purely malicious.

This has been recently settled, in a solemn and official manner, by the letter of Card. Antonelli, Secretary of State to His Holiness, written March 19th, 1870, in the name of the Pontiff, to the Nuncio in Paris, in answer to a well-known despatch of M. Daru, the then Secretary of State of the French Government. We will publish an extract from this important

official document, which decides the whole question, and leaves no room for cavil:—

“And, in fact, the Church has never intended, nor does it intend, to exercise direct and absolute power over the political rights of the state. She received from God the sublime mission of leading men, whether individually or collectively, to a supernatural aim; by this she holds the power and the duty of judging of the morality and justice of all actions, whether internal or external, in their connection with natural and divine law. Now, as all action, whether ordained by supreme power or emanating from individual liberty, cannot be exempt from the characteristics of morality and justice, it thence ensues that the judgment of the Church while bearing directly on the morality of actions, extends indirectly upon all matters connected with this morality. But this does not infer the intermeddling directly in political affairs, which, according to the order established by God and the teachings of the Church herself, are under the jurisdiction of the temporal power, without dependence on any other authority whatever. The subordination of the civil to the religious power rises thus from the pre-eminence of the priesthood over the empire, with respect to the end and aim of the one as compared with those of the other. Thus the authority of the empire depends on that of the priesthood, as human affairs depend on the divine, and temporal upon spiritual matters. If temporal felicity, which is the aim of the civil power, is subordinate to that eternal beatitude which is the spiritual aim of the sacerdotal power, does it not follow that, in considering the object with which God established them, one power is subordinate to the other, as their power and the object they pursue are respectively subordinate?”

“It results from these principles that, if the infallibility of the Church embrace—but not in the sense indicated by the French despatch—all that is necessary to the preservation of the integrity of the faith, no prejudice can accrue therefrom to science, history, or politics. The prerogative of infallibility is not an unknown fact in the Catholic world. At all times the supreme magistracy of the Church has dictated the rules of

faith without the internal arrangements of states being interfered with, and without their princes seeing just cause for alarm. They, indeed, wisely appreciating the influence of these regulations in the light of good order and civilized society, often constituted themselves the avengers and defenders of the doctrines defined, and obtained the full and respectful observance of the same by means of their royal concurrence.

“Does it not again follow from this that, if the Church was instituted by its divine founder as a true and perfect society, distinct from and independent of the civil power, invested with a full and triple authority, legislation, judiciary and executive, no confusion should arise therefrom in the progress of human society and the exercise of the rights of both powers. The competency of the one and of the other is clearly distinct and determined by the respective aim which they pursue. By virtue of its authority the Church does not interfere in any direct and absolute manner in the constitutive principles of governments, in the forms of different civil *regimes*, in the political rights of citizens, in their duties with respect to the state, and other matters pointed out in the Minister’s note. But no society can exist without a supreme principle as regulator of the morality of its actions and its laws. Such is the sublime mission confided by God to the Church, with a view to the happiness of nations, and without requiring for the accomplishment of this ministry interference with the free and prompt action of governments. It is, in fact, the Church that, in inculcating the principle of rendering to God the things that belong to God, to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar’s, imposes at the same time upon her children the obligation to obey conscientiously the authority of princes. But these should in their return remember that, if they issue laws contrary to the principles of eternal justice, to obey them would not be to render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar’s, but to purloin from God the things that are His.”

The time has long passed—for three centuries - when Pontiffs, acting in accordance with the generally received and

clearly established jurisprudence of the ages of faith, hurled the thunderbolts of excommunication, with annexed sentence of deposition, at the heads of tyrannical sovereigns, who crushed their people, and sacrilegiously invaded the rights of the Church. We have changed all that, and we have discovered an easier, though perhaps not a safer or wiser way, for getting rid of tyrants, and even of good though unpopular sovereigns. Bloody revolutions and blind mobs have but too often been substituted for what even the enemies of the Church must regard as the comparatively mild and wise adjudication of the Supreme Pontiffs, to whose sentence all once looked for a redress of grievances else unbearable. Bloodshed, rapine, confiscation have but too often taken the place of the sublime Pontifical arbitratorship between kings and peoples adopted by our fathers in the middle ages, when all were of one faith, and the tower of Babel with its confusion of tongues had not yet cursed the world with its dinning discord of creeds, and before infidelity became rife in the midst of Christian nations hitherto governed in accordance with the sound principles of Christianity.

Whether the change has been for the real good of mankind, or for the true and sound progress of humanity, we leave to others to pronounce. Several learned Protestant writers of this century, especially in Germany, have defended the act of Pope St. Gregory VII. in excommunicating and deposing the German Emperor Henry IV.,—the first Pontiff who formally exercised the power; as also that of other Pontiffs. They have shown, by an array of facts which can scarcely be resisted, that these measures of severity were blows struck at tyranny, in favor of the liberty of the Church, and for the benefit of a down-trodden people.\*

Governments, like garments must fit, or suit the people for whom they are formed. Some may need a monarchy; some may prefer a republic. The Church leaves all this to regulate itself, according to the choice of the people, or the circumstances of time and place, confining herself to teaching both

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\* See Voigt's (Protestant) Gregory VII. Also Hurter's (since converted) *Life of Innocent III.*, &c., &c.

sovereigns and peoples, their respective duties, as laid down by the law of Christ. She teaches boldly and fearlessly, though she may sometimes be able only to cry out in the wilderness to those who will not heed her voice.

It is well known that the great reigning Pontiff, first of all sovereigns in modern times, inaugurated a system of free government, even to the extent of establishing a deliberative assembly, in which the delegates of the people might fully and freely express their sentiments on matters which concerned their civil well-being. It is also alas! but too well known, how the enlightened benevolence of our great and good Pius IX. was thwarted by the wicked, and repaid with ingratitude and treachery by those very men whom he had amnestied and loaded with favors! His Prime Minister basely assassinated at midday, on the very steps of the chambers; his private secretary, the lamented Palma, shot down at his side by a cowardly assassin; himself imprisoned in his palace by a furious and blood-thirsty mob, and finally forced to fly from his capital, and become an exile and a wanderer on the earth!

Such was the return which those upon whom he had showered nothing but blessings made him for all his kindness, urged on as they were, and maddened by a few bold, bad men. Even now, after the storm has passed, and the skies have cleared, the Papal government is probably the one of all others, at least in Europe, in which the burdens laid on the people are lightest; where the rights of all citizens are most respected; where the administration is the mildest and most paternal, and where the masses of the people are the most contented and happy.

But liberty and *liberalism* will suffer by the definition! Beloved Brethren, there is *liberty* and *liberty*; there is perhaps likewise *liberalism* and *liberalism*. There is the true, and there is the counterfeit coin. There are three kinds of liberty, on each of which allow Us briefly to unfold Our thought.

1. There is the highest grade of liberty established by Christ Himself, "the liberty of the glory of the children



of God.”\* This is the liberty which Christ promised as the result of divine truth ; “and you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free ;”† and again, “if therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed.”‡ It is the blessed state to which only Christianity can bring us ; in which, ceasing to be the slaves of sin, we breathe the pure and free air of God’s children, and our hearts swell with the feeling of exultation at having our bonds broken, the snares of the devil destroyed and ourselves free with the freedom with which God has freed us ; for “where the spirit of God is, there is liberty,”|| and “whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin ;”§ nor can such a slave chant the peans of victory, without, at the same time, shaking his heavy chains.

This is the liberty which the Catholic Church has always inculcated, and it is this teaching precisely which has rendered possible any other kind of liberty. We thus owe all modern civil liberty to the humanizing influence in the christian masses of this precious leaven of Gospel liberty diffused among them by the Popes and the Church. Without this, true, real, solid civil liberty were an utter impossibility.

2. The second kind of liberty, and the highest possible type of it in civil governments, is that in which, whatever be the form of government, the rights of all citizens are respected and protected alike ; in which, if it be a republic, the majority rules while respecting the rights of the minority ; in which the taxes are equitably levied upon all citizens in proportion to their ability or means, and do not exceed what is necessary for carrying on the government ; above all, in which the property and the just rights and laws of the Church are respected, and left inviolate, and in which all citizens, ecclesiastics included, are equally protected by the law, not only as written, but as executed : in which, in a word, without discrimination, especially as between the rich and the poor, all

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\* Rom., viii. 21.

† St. John, viii. 32.

‡ St. John, viii. 36.

|| 2 Corinth., iii. 17.

§ St. John, viii. 34

are equally protected in their legitimate rights, all are equal before the law, and all are equally governed and are equally benefited by the law. This theory of liberty was, in substance, laid down by the Catholic schoolmen of the middle ages, but it has seldom, if ever, been fully realized in this imperfect world.

3. Has this species of liberty, or has any kind of liberty worthy the name, been guaranteed to the people by these European governments which profess to be governed by free institutions under the name of *Liberalism*? Alas! Beloved Brethren, that we cannot answer in the affirmative in regard to all or even the most of them. Inaugurated by revolution, the first step of these liberal governments has usually been, to seize upon and confiscate the property of the Church, to trample upon her dearest rights and liberties, to expel her ministers, such of them at least as they might choose to regard as obnoxious, to suppress her monasteries and convents, to turn her poor, helpless religious women into the streets, and to desecrate her holiest sanctuaries.\* Even when the storm had passed, and they had settled down into something of a normal state, it usually happened that the exchequer was empty, and that the population was ground down with excessive taxes. In most of them, what is called *liberty* thus becomes not only an expensive luxury, but an instrument for the still greater oppression of the masses of the people. As vast standing armies are necessary to sustain the new order of things, a most oppressive conscription, pervading all classes of the people, takes the place of the hitherto comparatively mild method adopted for recruiting the ranks of the army; and their taxes are fearfully increased, and the people are deprived of their substance and of their personal liberty. Among those who are the loudest champions of liberty, practice is not always in accordance with professions; and it is but fair to judge the

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\* We ourselves have seen beautiful churches in Italy, with marble altars and noble paintings and statuary of the first masters, turned into military magazines and barracks; and all this in the name of *liberty*!

latter by the former. Look at Italy, look at Spain, for the most recent and striking examples of what We here state.

It was necessary to state these things, Beloved Brethren, that you might be enabled to understand how it is, that the Pontiffs have so often protested against the excesses committed by these so-called European Liberals, in the hallowed name of liberty, which they, in too many cases, employ as a cloak for malice. The Popes have never uttered one word of censure against true liberty such as We have endeavored to depict it; on the contrary, they have done everything in their power to foster its growth. It is against the false principles which have been engrafted on the tree of liberty, not against the tree itself, that they have raised their voice of warning. It is but fair to judge their words and their acts by this standard of sadly existing facts based as they were upon false and dangerous principles subversive of all religion and of all justice.

And now, Venerable and Beloved Brethren, we have completed our task, imperfectly indeed but earnestly, and We must come to a conclusion, wishing you all blessings, both temporal and spiritual, and asking your fervent prayers in Our behalf, We remain in life and unto death your devoted Father in Christ,

MARTIN JOHN SPALDING,

*Archbishop of Baltimore.*

Given at Rome, outside the Flaminian Gate, on the Feast of St. Vincent de Paul, 19th July, 1870.

